CULCHETH HIGH SCHOOL

THE BEST THAT WE CAN BE

Vape and Smokefree Schools Policy

Reviewer: **Ms J Shaw**

Reviewed: **October 2026**

RATIFIED BY THE GOVERNING BODY

Signed: Y. L. Br .

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(Chair of Curriculum and Standards Committee)

Date: **6th November 2026**

RESPECT
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1.0 Introduction

This policy provides guidance for members of the school community on why we are a vape & smoke-free site. It has been developed with the need to balance the interests of the whole school, the need to protect children and enable all to work and learn in a vape & smoke-free environment.

Culcheth High School proudly holds the Warrington Gold Vape and SmokeFree School Award, coordinated in partnership with Warrington Borough Council Public Health Team, LiveWire Stop Smoking Service, and the NHS School Nursing Service. This award recognises our school's exemplary commitment to maintaining a completely smoke-free and vape-free environment, delivering high-quality preventative health education, and supporting students, staff, and families to quit smoking and vaping.

All children and young people need to be able to make safe, healthy and responsible decisions about smoking or vaping. Schools play a pivotal role in helping students make such decisions by providing education about the risks and effects of tobacco, vaping and the illicit products associated with both.

2.0 Aim

To reinforce that Culcheth High School is a 'SmokeFree and VapeFree' school and complies with all relevant national legislation.

This policy has been developed to protect all employees, students and visitors from exposure to second-hand smoke and aerosol emissions, assisting compliance with the Health Act 2006 and Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance. Exposure to second-hand smoke increases the risk of lung cancer, heart disease and other serious illnesses.

3.0 Objectives

The key objectives of this policy are:

- To provide a completely smoke-free and vape-free school environment for everyone.
- To provide children and young people with a clear, evidence-based, and consistent message regarding tobacco, vaping, and their impact on health.
- To provide practical assistance and signposting for staff, students, and parents who wish to quit smoking or vaping.
- To contribute to reducing smoking and youth vaping prevalence across Warrington.

4.0 Rationale & Statutory Basis

Under the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance for Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (RSHE), Health Education is mandatory for all secondary students. The guidance explicitly requires schools to teach students the facts and health risks associated with vaping, tobacco, and nicotine addiction.

Vapes are designed as adult smoking cessation tools and are strictly age-restricted (18+). Youth vaping carries risks of nicotine addiction, respiratory harm, and exposure to unregulated or illegal substances. This policy ensures that Culcheth High School fulfils its statutory duty to protect student health, manage behaviour, and deliver evidence-based health education.

Research demonstrates that smoking remains an addiction largely taken up in adolescence, with the majority of smokers starting before age 18. Furthermore, exposure to second-hand tobacco

smoke causes significant childhood morbidity, including asthma and respiratory infections. While e-cigarettes are recognised as an adult quit aid, nicotine use in young people carries specific risks due to heightened sensitivity in the developing brain. Culcheth High School takes a robust preventive approach to age-restricted products.

5.0 SmokeFree School Premises

In 2007 SmokeFree laws were introduced to protect people from the harmful effects of smoking in public places and workplaces. To further protect children, statutory legislation covers private vehicles carrying children.

Smoking or vaping is STRICTLY PROHIBITED in any part of Culcheth High School premises. This includes kitchens, staffrooms, entrance areas, car parks, garden areas, walkways, playgrounds, sports fields, and adjacent land forming part of the school grounds. This prohibition applies equally to any future premises at design, refurbishment, or relocation stages.

There are NO designated smoking or vaping areas anywhere within the school premises.

This policy applies universally to employees, students, parents, visitors, contractors, and any members of the public using the school premises or vehicles. The policy is clearly advertised across the site, and staff are authorised to ask any non-employee breaching the policy to comply immediately. Disciplinary procedures apply for staff and students who fail to comply.

6.0 Vehicles

All school owned, hired, or leased vehicles are strictly Vape & SmokeFree and display mandatory 'no-smoking' signage. Staff are not permitted to smoke or vape in their personal vehicles when carrying passengers on school business.

7.0 Assistance for those who smoke or vape

We recognise that tobacco and nicotine dependence are addictive behaviours. Culcheth High School pledges to support any student, staff member, or parent who wishes to give up smoking or vaping by providing accessible information and referral pathways.

LiveWire SmokeFree provides free, friendly, and confidential support for anyone who lives or works in Warrington. Trained cessation advisors are available to assist secondary students, staff, and parents:

- Telephone: 0300 003 0818
- Social Media / Direct Message: Facebook @smokefreewarrington
- Online Self-Referral: LiveWire Stop Smoking section via Warrington Borough Council portal
- Drop-In Clinics: Bi-weekly sessions at Bewsey & Dallam Hub and The Gateway

For students wishing to access support, staff can complete a LiveWire referral form, and an advisor will arrange confidential follow-up.

8.0 Appointments

Culcheth High School's smoke-free and vape-free status is clearly stated in all appointment procedures, candidate packs, staff handbooks, and the school prospectus, as well as being prominently published on the school website.

9.0 Working with Parents, Carers, and Governors

Culcheth High School works in partnership with parents and carers to reinforce healthy choices and positive behaviour. In line with DfE statutory RSHE requirements:

- **Curriculum Consultation:** Parents and carers are consulted on the content of the RSHE health education curriculum, including teaching delivered on smoking, vaping, and nicotine dependency.
- **Resource Transparency:** All teaching materials and resources used in RSHE lessons regarding vaping and smoking are available for parents and carers to view upon request.
- **Third-Party Providers:** The school will not enter into contractual agreements with external providers that restrict the sharing of educational resources with parents.
- **Support for Families:** Parents and carers who smoke or vape can access local stop-smoking support services via Warrington's LiveWire service.

10.0 Working with students

Students are made fully aware that Culcheth High School is a vape and smoke-free environment and understand the disciplinary consequences of breaches. Because nicotine addiction is difficult to break, support mechanisms are integrated alongside behavioural sanctions.

11.0 Monitoring

School management routinely monitors the implementation of this policy. Key operational monitoring procedures include:

Nicotine Litter: Staff and site caretakers monitor and record evidence of cigarette or vape littering, tracking locations and frequency across the site.

Illicit Tobacco & Vapes: Illicit tobacco (counterfeit or non-duty paid) and unregulated vapes present significant harm. Any non-compliant packages or unregulated vapes found on site are reported to Warrington Trading Standards, including information on supply sources where known.

Confiscation & Disposal: All confiscated items (legal or illicit) are permanently seized and will NOT be returned to students, parents, or guardians. Legal devices are safely stored and recycled via WEEE-compliant schemes (e.g. Valpak collection boxes).

Disciplinary Procedures: In line with Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) guidance, punishment for smoking or vaping is proportionate. Suspension or exclusion is not used solely for smoking/vaping unless associated with severe secondary misconduct.

12.0 Health and Well-being

This policy forms an integral part of Culcheth High School's whole-school approach to health promotion, aligned with Warrington Borough Council Public Health priorities. Culcheth High School holds the Gold Vape and SmokeFree School Award in recognition of our comprehensive preventative curriculum, robust site policies, visible smoke-free signage, and effective cessation support pathways.

VAPING-SPECIFIC CONTENT

13.0 Background

Vapes (e-cigarettes) are the most common adult stop-smoking aid in the UK and are significantly less harmful than smoking tobacco for adult smokers. However, clear guidance from NICE and the Chief Medical Officer states that vapes should NEVER be used by children or non-smokers.

The law bans the sale of vapes to under-18s and prohibits proxy purchasing. Despite this, youth vaping data indicates significant experimentation among adolescents. Excessive vape use can cause nausea, sore throats, dizziness, and headaches. Furthermore, unregulated illicit vapes pose extreme toxicity risks, including dangerous heavy metal contamination (lead, nickel).

As summarised by Chief Medical Officer Sir Chris Whitty: 'If you smoke, vaping is much safer; if you don't smoke, don't vape.'

14.0 RSHE Curriculum & Prevention

As part of the statutory RSHE curriculum strand for Health Education, all students will receive age-appropriate, evidence-based instruction on drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and vaping. Teaching will cover:

- **Facts & Risks:** The physical and mental health risks of vaping and smoking, including nicotine addiction, respiratory impact, and exposure to unknown chemical toxins.
- **Adult Quit Aid vs. Youth Harm:** The explicit distinction between vapes as a regulated adult smoking cessation tool and the physical harms/addiction risks for young people.
- **Legislation & Age Limits:** Laws prohibiting the sale of tobacco and vapes to under-18s, including proxy purchasing laws.
- **Resisting Influence:** Developing practical skills to manage peer pressure, resist coercion, and critically analyse online marketing and social media trends promoting vaping.
- **Environmental Impact:** The environmental harm caused by single-use disposable vapes, lithium-ion batteries, and plastics.

15.0 Searching, Screening, Confiscation, and Prohibited Items

In accordance with DfE guidance on Searching, Screening and Confiscation and the school's Behaviour Policy, vapes, e-cigarettes, e-liquids, and tobacco products are explicitly designated as Prohibited Banned Items on school grounds.

- **Authorised Searches:** Headteachers and authorised staff have a statutory power to search a student or their possessions where there are reasonable grounds to suspect possession of prohibited vaping or smoking items.
- **Confiscation & Safe Disposal:** Confiscated devices will not be returned to students or parents. Single-use vapes containing lithium-ion batteries will be stored safely away from combustible materials and recycled through WEEE-compliant schemes.
- **Safeguarding Escalation:** Where a search reveals repeated vaping behaviour, involvement in selling/distributing vapes, or suspected exploitation (e.g. peer pressure or county lines/substance supply), staff will complete a safeguarding assessment in line with KCSIE and Working Together to Safeguard Children.

16.0 Additional Relevant Supporting Documentation

This policy cross-references key DfE and national guidance documents, including:

- DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation Guidance (2022)
- DfE Behaviour in Schools Guidance
- Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Guidance for Schools
- Culcheth High School Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Culcheth High School Substance Misuse Policy
- PHE / UKHSA Guidance on E-cigarettes in Public Places

17.0 Disposal and Safe Storage

Single-use disposable vapes contain lithium-ion batteries and electrical components classified as Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE). Confiscated vapes are never placed in general waste. They are stored in clearly marked containers away from flammable materials and recycled through approved WEEE collectors (Valpak scheme).

18.0 Following up on Vaping Behaviour

When vaping behaviour or prohibited items are identified, Culcheth High School executes a structured follow-up protocol:

- Exploring underlying safeguarding risks, mental health needs, or peer exploitation.
- Investigating supply sources and reporting illegal retailers to Trading Standards.
- Communicating promptly with parents/carers regarding the incident, policy rationale, and sanctions.
- Making appropriate health, cessation, or pastoral support referrals.

19.0 Working with Other Local Agencies

The school actively collaborates with external statutory and community partners:

- **Trading Standards:** Reported regarding underage sales or illicit products in the community (Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline: 0808 223 1133).
- **Police:** Notified if illicit products or distribution networks indicate local criminal exploitation or gang involvement.
- **Safeguarding & Early Help:** Referrals made under standard KCSIE protocols where vaping intersects with exploitation or vulnerability.

20.0 Support for students to stop using vapes

Vaping is not recommended as a quit aid for under-18s. Students requiring nicotine cessation support are signposted to local NHS pathways and LiveWire Warrington, where age-appropriate guidance and Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT, for ages 12+) can be accessed under medical supervision.

21.0 Reporting Adverse Reactions

In the event of an acute physical reaction to a vape (nausea, dizziness, respiratory distress, loss of consciousness), emergency medical care is summoned immediately. The incident is reported to the MHRA Yellow Card Scheme and Warrington Public Health to support toxicity

investigations and alerts. In line with Benedict's Law, from 1st September 2026, all school staff (teaching and support) are fully compliant in requirements relating to mandatory annual training on Allergy and Asthma awareness.

22.0 Illicit Substances, Synthetic Cannabinoids, and Adulterated Vapes

Vaping devices can be modified or misused to administer illegal or hazardous substances.

- **THC & Synthetic Cannabinoids (Spice):** Vape liquids marketed as 'THC' or 'CBD' may contain illegal synthetic cannabinoids (Spice) or unknown toxic chemicals (e.g. Vitamin E acetate). These carry severe health risks including rapid heart rate, loss of consciousness, psychosis, and respiratory distress.
- **Severe Health Reactions:** Any acute physical reaction suspected to involve adulterated vapes will result in immediate emergency medical attention, notification of parents/carers, a safeguarding referral, and reporting to Warrington Public Health and the MHRA Yellow Card Scheme.
- **Drug Policy Integration:** Incidents involving vapes containing illegal or controlled substances will be handled under the school's Substance Misuse Policy and reported to the Police where appropriate.

23.0 Incorporating Vaping into a Whole School Approach

Culcheth High School embeds vaping prevention into its broader culture of health and sustainability by auditing site risk spots, training staff to recognise emerging trends, delivering robust RSHE modules, maintaining active parental engagement, and fulfilling the criteria of the local Gold Vape and SmokeFree School Award framework (including student vape ambassadors and dedicated health drop-ins).

24.0 Resources, Staff Training, and External Visitors

- **Approved RSHE Resources:** Teachers will utilise quality-assured resources (such as DfE-aligned materials and PSHE Association lesson plans) to deliver vaping and tobacco education.
- **External Providers & Visitors:** Any external visitors or local health agencies delivering vaping awareness sessions must be vetted prior to delivery. Providers must ensure their materials are evidence-based, unbiased, age-appropriate, and available for advance review by parents and carers.
- **Staff CPD:** Staff will receive regular training on identifying vaping trends, handling disclosures, conducting searches safely, and understanding local referral pathways.

25.0 Resources to Support Students, Staff, Families and Carers

Recognising that many parents, carers, and staff may be seeking to quit smoking or vaping, the school signposts the following evidence-based NHS resources:

- NHS Better Health - Vaping to Quit Smoking: www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/
- NHS Live Well - Using E-cigarettes to Stop Smoking: www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/
- LiveWire Warrington Stop Smoking Service: livewirewarrington.co.uk/lifestyle/stop-smoking